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(58) Field of Search

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(54) Abstract Title

Polishing apparatus.

(57) The apparatus includes a polishing pad, a substrate holder, and a retainer ring. The polishing pad is adhered to a polishing table. The substrate holder urges, while it holds a substrate as a polishing target, a polishing target surface of the substrate against the polishing pad. The retainer ring is formed on a holding surface of the substrate holder to correspond to the circumference of the substrate. The retainer ring has a resin portion formed on its surface which is to come into contact with the polishing pad, and an annular resin holding portion for holding the resin portion and made of a material having a higher mechanical strength than the resin portion.

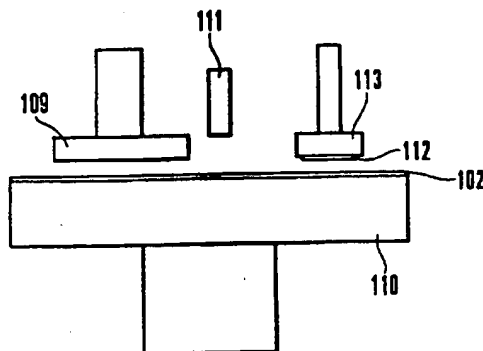


FIG. 1A

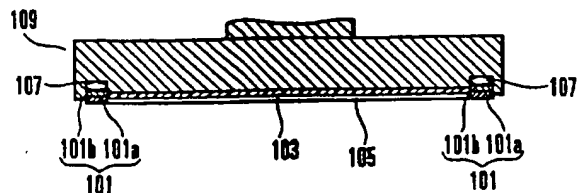


FIG. 1B

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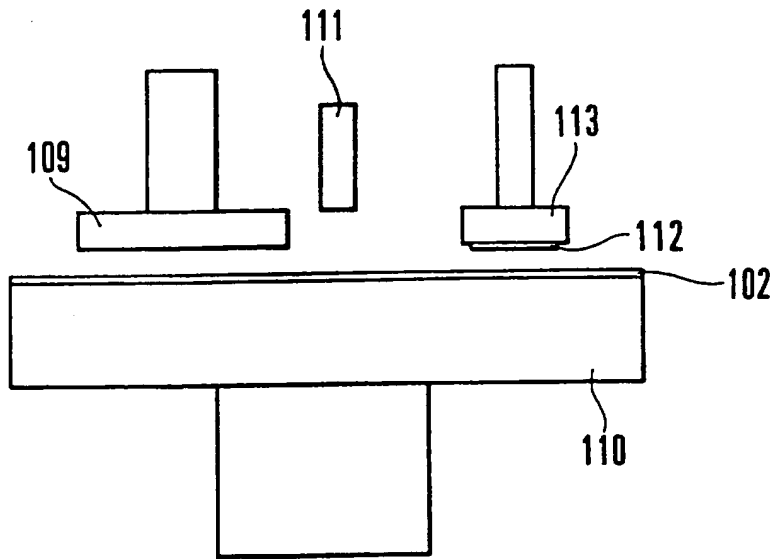


FIG. 1A

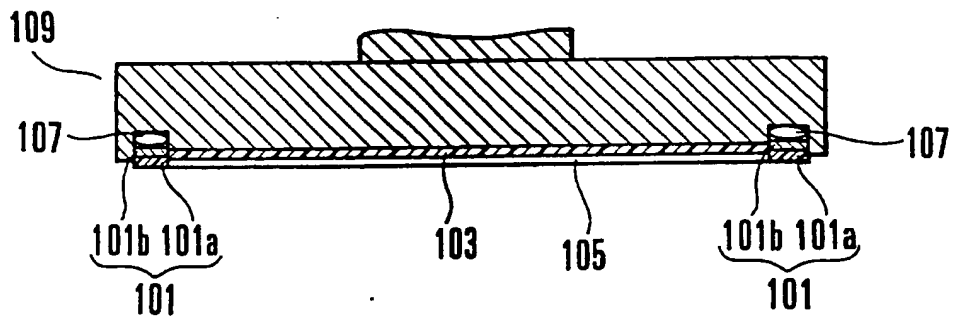


FIG. 1B

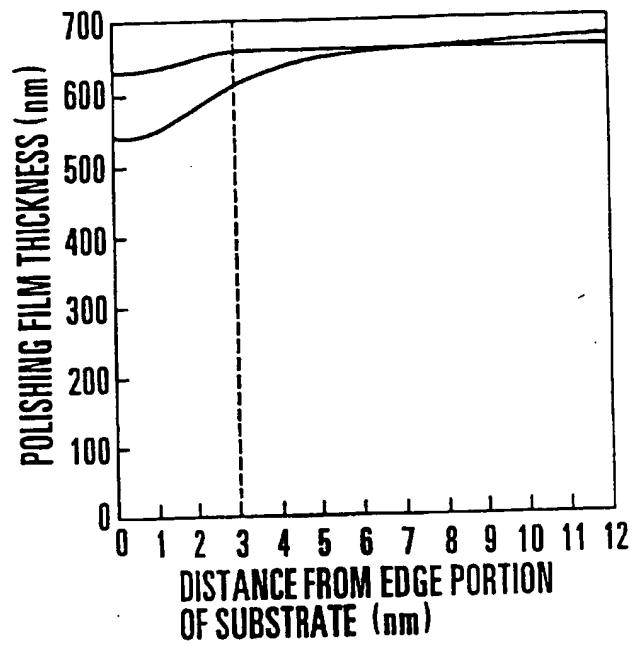


FIG. 2

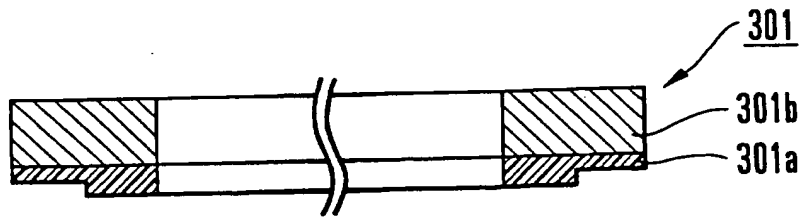


FIG. 3A

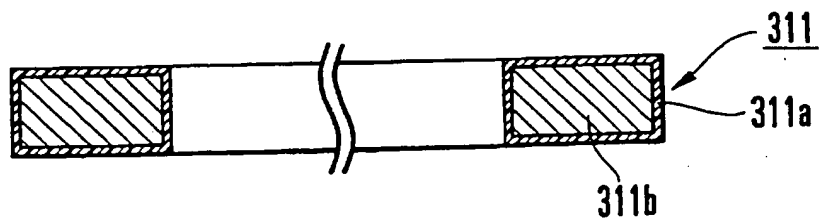


FIG. 3B

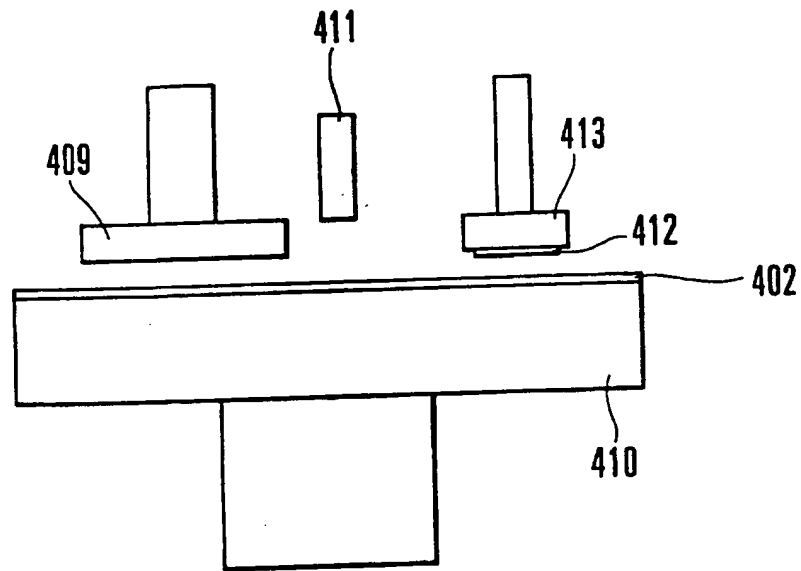


FIG. 4A

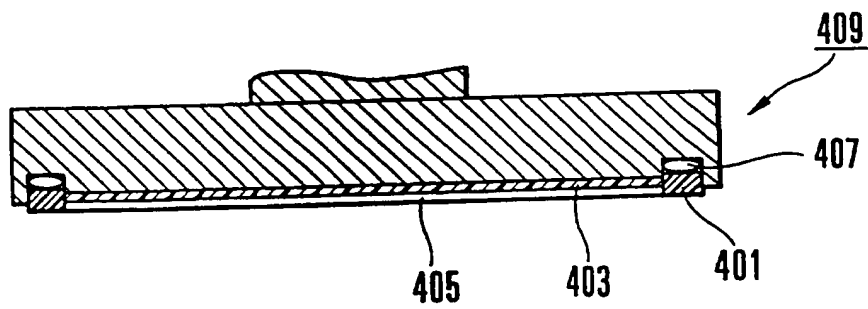


FIG. 4B

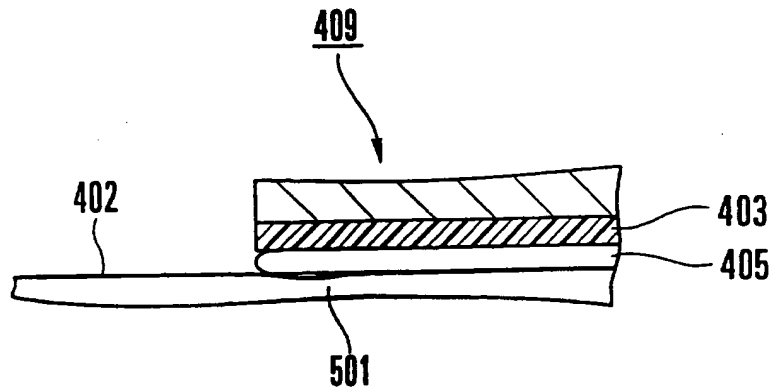


FIG. 5A

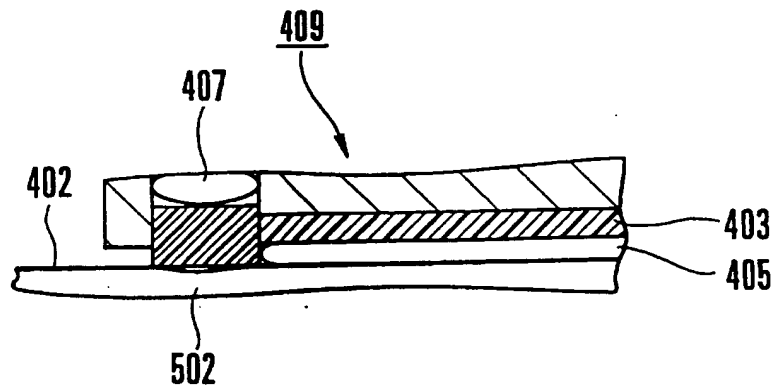


FIG. 5B

Specification

Title of the Invention

Polishing Apparatus

5 Background of the Invention

The present invention relates to a polishing apparatus used in, e.g., chemical-mechanical polishing (CMP).

10 A technique for planarizing a substrate surface by polishing has been employed in many fields including the semiconductor substrate fabrication process. In recent years, CMP for planarizing the unevenness of a surface, e.g., the unevenness of the surface of an interlevel insulating film, formed during
15 the fabrication by polishing is used in a process of fabricating devices on a semiconductor substrate.

In CMP, hard polishing cloth made of a material such as foamed polyurethane, different from relatively soft polishing cloth comprised of unwoven
20 fabric used for polishing the surface of the semiconductor substrate, is used to planarize the insulating film. To obtain the polishing uniformity within the substrate surface, an elastic cushion layer is generally formed under a hard pad.

25 Figs. 4A and 4B show the arrangement of a conventional polishing apparatus.

As shown in Fig. 4A, the conventional

polishing apparatus is constituted by a substrate holder 409 for holding a polishing target, a polishing table 410 to which a polishing pad 402 is adhered, an abrasive supply member 411, and a conditioning mechanism 413 on 5 which a diamond pellet 412 is mounted. Mechanisms provided to the substrate holder 409 and conditioning mechanism 413 to rotate, swing, and press them, and a rotational mechanism provided to the polishing table 410 are not illustrated.

10 As shown in Fig. 4B, a retainer ring 401 is set on a surface of the substrate holder 409 which opposes a substrate 405, to correspond to the circumference of the substrate 405. The retainer ring 401 holds the substrate 405 and prevents lateral shift 15 of the substrate 405. As the material of the retainer ring 401, a hard plastic such as polyethylene terephthalate is used. An air cushion 407 applies a downward load to the retainer ring 401. An elastic layer called an insert pad 403 is formed on the surface 20 of the substrate holder 409 inside the retainer ring 401.

By using the polishing arrangement having the above arrangement, for example, the surface of an interlevel insulating layer in the multilevel interconnection structure of an LSI is planarized.

25 During polishing, the retainer ring 401 prevents not only lateral shift of the substrate 405 but also abnormal polishing of the outer peripheral portion

of the substrate 405. More specifically, during polishing, the substrate 405 is urged against the polishing table 410 by the polishing pad 402 consisting of an upper hard layer and a lower soft layer. The
5 contact pressure is the maximum at the outer peripheral portion of the substrate 405.

At this time, as shown in Fig. 5A, the polishing pad 402 is deformed by the pressing force of the substrate 405 for several mm from the outer
10 peripheral portion of the substrate 405, and the pressure acting on the outer peripheral portion of the substrate 405 decreases. As a result, the polishing amount on the outer peripheral portion of the substrate 405 decreases. In particular, depending on the modulus
15 of elasticity of the insert pad 403 and other polishing conditions, a deformation region 501 of the polishing pad 402 sometimes extends for several cm from the outer peripheral portion of the substrate 405.

In the conventional polishing apparatus,
20 abnormal polishing is suppressed in the following manner. First, the surfaces of the retainer ring 401 and substrate 405 that are to come into contact with the polishing pad 402 are set to be flush. The width of the retainer ring 401 with which the retainer ring 401 is to
25 come into contact with the polishing pad 402 is set to be equal to or more than the deformation region described above of the polishing pad 402. This

suppresses a deformation region 502 from extending over the outer peripheral portion of the substrate 405, as shown in Fig. 5B.

A load is applied to the retainer ring 401 by the air cushion 407 independently of applying a load to the substrate 405. This makes the pressure that presses the retainer ring 401 against the polishing pad 402 independent and constant. For example, the retainer ring 401 is brought into contact with the polishing pad 402 with a load of about 500 g/cm^2 ($\approx 7 \text{ psi}$).

For this reason, during polishing, the retainer ring 401 is also polished by the polishing pad 402, and the material of the retainer ring 401 generated by grinding spreads over the polishing pad 402 as impurities. In this case, if an alloy material such as stainless steel is used to form the retainer ring 401, the metal component generated by grinding spreads over the polishing pad 402 to adversely affect the characteristics of devices formed on the substrate 405. Also, the cutting chips of the alloy material damage the polishing surface of the polishing pad 402. To solve these problems, a plastic is used as the material of the conventional retainer ring 401.

As the process amount increases, the plastic retainer ring 401 deforms, and the specified performance is not maintained.

In this case, even if a hard plastic is used

to suppress deformation, its mechanical strength is limited and inferior to that of a metal alloy material such as stainless steel. Even a conventional retainer ring using a hard plastic deforms when the number of polishing processes increases, and the capability of the retainer to press the polishing pad degrades. As a result, in the conventional polishing apparatus, when the number of polishing processes increases, an abnormality in polishing amount occurs on the outer peripheral portion of the substrate as a polishing target.

Summary of the Invention

It is an object of the present invention to provide a polishing apparatus in which, even if the number of polishing processes increases, occurrence of an abnormality in polishing amount on the outer peripheral portion of the substrate as a polishing target is suppressed.

In a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided polishing apparatus comprising:

a polishing surface;

means for forcing a surface of a sample to be polished against said polishing surface; and

a retainer ring provided on said means for surrounding said substrate, said ring having a resin portion for contacting said polishing surface and holding means for holding said resin portion, said holding means having a higher mechanical strength than said resin portion.

In a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a polishing apparatus comprising a polishing pad adhered to a polishing table, a substrate holder for urging, while holding a substrate as a polishing target, a polishing target surface of the substrate against the polishing pad, and a retainer ring formed on a holding surface of the substrate holder to correspond to a circumference of the substrate, the retainer ring having a resin portion formed on a surface thereof which is to come into contact with the polishing pad, and an annular resin holding portion for holding the resin portion and made of a material having a higher mechanical strength than the resin portion.

20

Brief Description of the Drawings

Preferred features of the present invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

25

Fig. 1A is a front view of a polishing apparatus according to an embodiment of the present invention, and Fig. 1B is a sectional view of the main part of the substrate holder shown in Fig. 1A;

5 Fig. 2 is a graph showing the polishing characteristics;

 Figs. 3A and 3B are views each showing deformation of the retainer ring shown in Fig. 1B;

 Fig. 4A is a front view of a conventional
10 polishing apparatus, and Fig. 4B is a sectional view of the main part of the substrate holder shown in Fig. 4A;
 and

 Figs. 5A and 5B are views each showing deformation of the polishing pad.

15 Description of the Preferred Embodiment

 The present invention will be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings.

 Fig. 1 schematically shows a polishing
 apparatus according to an embodiment of the present
20 invention. As shown in Fig. 1A, the polishing apparatus
 according to this embodiment is constituted by a

substrate holder 109 for holding a substrate as a polishing target, a polishing table 110 to which a polishing pad 102 is adhered, an abrasive supply member 111, and a conditioning mechanism 113 on which a diamond pellet 112 is mounted.

The polishing pad 102 has a two-layered structure constituted by an upper hard layer and a lower soft layer. Mechanisms provided to the substrate holder 109 and conditioning mechanism 113 to rotate, swing, and press them, and a rotational mechanism provided to the polishing table 110 are not illustrated.

As shown in Fig. 1B, a retainer ring 101 is set on a surface (holding surface) of the substrate holder 109 which opposes a substrate 105, to correspond to the circumference of the substrate 105. The retainer ring 101 holds the substrate 105 and prevents lateral shift of the substrate 105. An air cushion 107 biases the retainer ring 101 toward the polishing table 110. An elastic layer called an insert pad 103 is formed on the surface of the substrate holder 109 inside the retainer ring 101.

To perform polishing, the polishing target surface of the substrate 105 is pressed against the polishing pad 102 through the insert pad 103. For example, part of the multilevel interconnection structure of an LSI is formed on the polishing target surface of the substrate 105, and an interlevel

insulating film is formed on the uppermost layer of the multilevel interconnection structure. An unevenness formed by a lower wiring layer or the like is present on the surface of the interlevel insulating film. The
5 polishing apparatus of this embodiment planarizes this unevenness by cutting and polishing in accordance with CMP.

As shown in Fig. 1B, the retainer ring 101 is constituted by a lower resin portion 101a made of a hard
10 plastic such as polyethylene terephthalate, and an upper metal portion 101b made of, e.g., SUS 316 (stainless steel). The metal portion 101b serving as a resin holding portion, and the resin portion 101a are firmly bonded to each other with an adhesive. A surface of the
15 resin portion 101a of the retainer ring 101 which is to come into contact with the polishing pad 102 is set to be flush with that of the polishing target surface of the substrate 105.

The retainer ring 101 is biased by using the
20 air cushion 107 independently of controlling a load to the substrate 105. This makes the pressure that presses the retainer ring 101 against the polishing pad 102 independent and constant. For example, the retainer ring 101 is brought into contact with the polishing pad
25 102 with a biasing force (pressure) of about 500 g/cm^2 ($\approx 7 \text{ psi}$).

According to this embodiment, the retainer

ring 101 has a two-layered structure constituted by the resin portion 101a and metal portion 101b. As a result, compared to a conventional case wherein the whole retainer ring is formed of a hard plastic, the
5 mechanical strength of the retainer ring 101 increases considerably.

Of the retainer ring 101, only its resin portion 101a comes into contact with the polishing pad 102, and its metal portion 101b does not. Therefore, no
10 metal component will spread over the polishing pad 102 to adversely affect the characteristics of devices formed on the substrate 105. Also, the polishing surface of the polishing table will not be damaged by the cutting chips of the metal material.

15 A practical example of polishing apparatus of this embodiment will be described.

In the polishing apparatus using the retainer ring 101, an 8-inch diameter silicon substrate formed with an oxide film on its surface was employed as a
20 sample. The oxide film was removed by CMP. The thickness of the oxide film to be removed by polishing was set to about 650 nm. Under these conditions, 25 substrates were polished. When the 26th substrate was polished, a region where the polishing film thickness was smaller by about 20 nm to 30 nm was formed at a
25 region of about 3 mm from the outer peripheral portion of the silicon substrate, as indicated by a curve (a) of

Fig. 2.

In contrast to this, the same process was performed by using the conventional retainer ring 401 (Fig. 4B) formed of only a hard plastic. As a result, a region where the polishing film thickness was small was formed at a region of about 5 mm or more from the outer peripheral portion of the silicon substrate, as indicated by a curve (b) of Fig. 2.

In this manner, when the retainer ring 101 of this embodiment is used, even if the polishing process amount increases, abnormal polishing occurring on the outer peripheral portion of the substrate as the polishing target can be suppressed.

In the embodiment, the resin portion 101a and metal portion 101b of the retainer ring 101 have almost the same shape. However, the present invention is not limited to this. For example, as shown in Fig. 3A, a stepped resin portion 301a may be formed, and the shapes of the resin portion 301a and a metal portion 301b may be different from each other. When a retainer ring 301 is formed in this manner, its mechanical strength and its contact area with the polishing pad 102 of the polishing table 110 can be designed freely.

As shown in Fig. 3B, a retainer ring 311 may be formed such that its resin portion 311a covers its annular metal portion 311b. When the retainer ring 311 is formed in this manner, the resin portion 311a and

metal portion 311b need not be brought into tight contact with each other through an adhesive or the like. As a result, even when the resin portion 311a cannot be adhered to the metal portion 311b depending on combinations of the materials, the retainer ring 311 can be fabricated.

In the above embodiment, stainless steel is used to form the metal portion, and polyethylene terephthalate is used to form the resin portion. However, the present invention is not limited to this, but the following engineering plastics may be used instead. More specifically, examples are polycarbonate, polyamide, polybutylene terephthalate, polysulfone, polyether sulfone, polyether ether ketone, polyamide imide, polyether imide, a chlorotrifluoroethylene-ethylene copolymer, and the like.

The material of the metal portion is not limited to stainless steel, but a metal having a resistance to corrosion and a high mechanical strength, or its alloy may be used.

As has been described above, according to the present invention, since a resin is used to form only a surface of the retainer ring which is to come into contact with the polishing pad, a higher mechanical strength than that obtained when the entire retainer ring is made of only a resin can be obtained. As a result, even when the number of polishing processes

increases, the retainer ring does not substantially deform, and occurrence of an abnormality in polishing amount on the outer peripheral portion of the substrate as the polishing target can be suppressed.

5 Each feature disclosed in this specification (which term includes the claims) and/or shown in the drawings may be incorporated in the invention independently of other disclosed and/or illustrated features.

15 Statements in this specification of the "objects of the invention" relate to preferred embodiments of the invention, but not necessarily to all embodiments of the invention falling within the claims.

The description of the invention with reference to the drawings is by way of example only.

20 The text of the abstract filed herewith is repeated here as part of the specification.

25 A polishing apparatus includes a polishing pad, a substrate holder, and a retainer ring. The polishing pad is adhered to a polishing table. The substrate holder urges, while it holds a substrate as a polishing target, a polishing target surface of the substrate against the polishing pad. The retainer ring is formed on a holding surface of the substrate holder to correspond to the circumference of the substrate. The
30 retainer ring has a resin portion formed on its surface

which is to come into contact with the polishing pad,
and an annular resin holding portion for holding the
resin portion and made of a material having a higher
mechanical strength than the resin portion.

CLAIMS:

1. Polishing apparatus comprising:
a polishing surface (102);
means (109) for forcing a surface of a sample to be
5 polished against said polishing surface; and
a retainer ring (101, 301, 311) provided on said means
for surrounding said substrate, said ring having a resin
portion (101a, 301a, 301b) for contacting said polishing
surface (102) and holding means (101b, 301a, 301b) for
10 holding said resin portion, said holding means having a
higher mechanical strength than said resin portion.
2. Apparatus according to Claim 1, comprising a polishing
pad (102) adhered to a polishing table (110).
- 15 3. Apparatus according to Claim 1 or 2, wherein said
retainer ring has an internal diameter substantially equal
to the diameter of the sample to be polished.
- 20 4. A polishing apparatus characterized by comprising:
a polishing pad (102) adhered to a polishing table
(110);
a substrate holder (109) for urging, while holding a
substrate (105) as a polishing target, a polishing target
25 surface of the substrate against said polishing pad; and
a retainer ring (101, 301, 311) formed on a holding
surface of said substrate holder to correspond to a
circumference of the substrate, said retainer ring having

a resin portion (101a, 301a, 301b) formed on a surface thereof which is to come into contact with said polishing pad, and an annular resin holding portion (101b, 301a, 301b) for holding said resin portion and made of a material having a higher mechanical strength than said resin portion.

5. An apparatus according to Claim 4, wherein said retainer ring has a two-layered structure formed by stacking said resin portion annularly on a surface of said resin holding portion which opposes said polishing pad.

6. An apparatus according to Claim 4, wherein said retainer ring has a molded structure in which an entire surface of said resin holding portion is covered with said resin portion.

7. An apparatus according to any of Claims 4 to 6, wherein said resin holding portion is formed from one of a metal and an alloy.

8. An apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein said resin holding portion is formed from stainless steel.

9. An apparatus according to any of Claims 4 to 8, wherein said resin portion is formed from a hard plastic.

10. An apparatus according to Claim 9, wherein the resin portion is formed from one of a group of materials consisting of polyethylene, terephthalate, polycarbonate, polyamide, polybutylene terephthalate, polysulfone, polyether sulfone, polyether ether ketone, polyamide imide, polyether imide, and a chlorotrifluoroethylene-ethylene copolymer.

11. An apparatus according to any of Claims 4 to 10, further comprising:

an elastic member (103) provided on a holding surface of said substrate holder inside said retainer ring, and

a biasing member (107) provided on said substrate holder to bias said retainer ring against said polishing pad.

12. Polishing apparatus substantially as herein described with reference to and as shown in Figures 1A and 1B.



Application No: GB 9908325.5
Claims searched: 1-12

Examiner: R.B. Luck
Date of search: 29 July 1999

Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:
UK Cl (Ed.Q): B3D DMN,DMW,DUH2
Int Cl (Ed.6): B24B 37/04,41/06
Other:

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
X	GB1352932 H.Struers Chemiske Laboratorium	1-4,6,7

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
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